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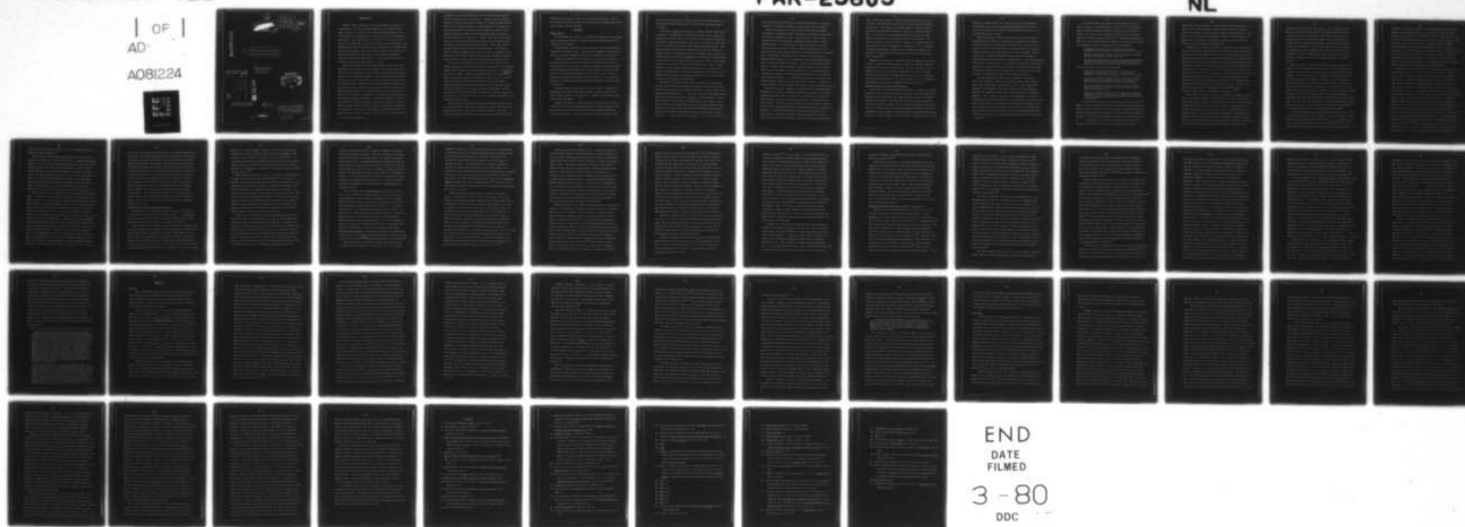
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Detente and the Debate about it:
How to Understand and Evaluate Both,

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by William Taubman

Amherst College

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Introduction

Detente. Almost everyone who uses the word complains that it has no clear meaning. Although it has been haggled over in the Congress, the media, the universities (even in the Soviet dissident movement), voices including that of the Secretary of State regularly call for a national debate about it. The argument about it in Washington comes across in the media as a veritable duel to the death, but while Secretary Kissinger often challenges his critics to produce a viable alternative to it, James Reston almost as often reports, after not-for-direct-attribution interviews, that the Secretary "does not believe there is any fundamental ideological difference between him and the Democrats. They usually agree with him in private and then abandon him in public, he says."¹

These and other paradoxes (e.g., Henry Kissinger implies that James Schlesinger is a pessimist for not believing in it, to which Schlesinger replies that he, Schlesinger, is the optimist and Kissinger the pessimist)² reflects a real and important problem. There has indeed been an extensive national discussion of detente but it has yielded precious little clarity let alone consensus. Not only are we far from agreement as to who's right and wrong in the debate (which is to be expected since the issues are complex and subjective), but we are also far from having the kind of clear conception of the debate itself which is a prerequisite for informed choosing among participants and positions. The debate is usually portrayed as a two-way exchange between Secretary Kissinger and his critics. It is, in fact, a four-way argument reflecting a cross-cutting pattern of agreement and disagreement. James Reston notwithstanding, Secretary Kissinger and Senator Jackson actually do disagree! But they also share the neo-Cold War

1. See footnotes following p. 44.

assumption that containing the Soviet Union is still the most important task confronting American foreign policy. Liberal Senators like Edward Kennedy by and large have defended detente, but whereas the Administration offers it as a long-term strategy for holding Moscow at bay, Kennedy and his colleagues seek to move beyond detente to what they regard as more important global (and domestic American) problems which do not involve the USSR directly or even indirectly. Finally, there are radical writers (such as I.F. Stone and Richard Barnet) who are less than ecstatic about a reduction in Soviet-American tensions because, I shall argue, they do not take those tensions seriously in the first place. Yet ironically, radical criticism resembles in form, if not content, the argument of hard-line critics (e.g., Senator Jackson) who take those tensions so seriously that they refuse to admit that there has occurred any relaxation at all.

At the risk of only adding to the confusion, this paper will first attempt to analyze the four schools or lines of thought and their assumptions. Breaking down the debate into four perspectives eliminates some distortions, but may create others. Even a four-way division may lump together/which positions differ in significant detail; it may ascribe too much consistency to some debaters, particularly practicing politicians; it gives equal time to writers with great political influence and those who, though they may have the truth and history on their side, lack clout in Washington. But the advantages of this approach outweigh its drawbacks. For when so much discussion does not see the forest for the trees, it should be excusable to miss a few trees for the forest.

The second aim of this effort is to take up directly the major issues in the debate, that is, what detente is and isn't, what's new and not, and good and bad about it. First, I will divide the Cold War itself into several periods the more effectively to argue that the current reduction in

Soviet-American tensions is both new and a valuable achievement. Next I will suggest that the best policy for the future may be a fifth approach which draws insights from the other four.

The Debate

Radical Critics

I.F. Stone describes detente as a "new type of convergence--one of bureaucratic convenience," which is "encouraging the worst rather than the best tendencies of both sides."³

Richard Barnet writes that "the U.S. has now settled for a more modest definition of national security. But most of the changes in U.S.-Soviet relations, it should be emphasized, took place in Washington, not Moscow."⁴

Richard Falk judges that "the Chinese are at least partly correct in their interpretation of hegemonic superpower relations; alongside the persisting U.S.-Soviet rivalry there is evident an emerging pattern of cooperation in managing world politics, often at the expense of the weak and poor. In other words, the Cold War cover story is no longer credible as an explanation of American intervention in the third world; the actual motivation has more to do with imperial considerations of prestige, control and access to resources."⁵

And David Horowitz charges that "we have only recently witnessed our government moving dramatically toward a detente with China and the Soviet Union, thereby exposing the Cold War myth of Communist aggression and necessary American containment. . . ."⁶

Comments like these are striking and yet not entirely clear. Radical critics who were among the most outspoken critics of the Vietnam War, seemed to share the views of liberal legislators who campaigned against the Indochina involvement. Why then do radicals, along with a sizable segment

of the American intellectual community, refuse to welcome developments in Soviet-American relations which their former liberal allies have seen fit to defend?

The answer, suggested by such phrases as Falk's "Cold War cover story" and Horowitz' "Cold War myth," is that radical critics do not really take the Cold War seriously, in the sense that they do not credit the proposition put forward by American Presidents from Truman to Ford that the Soviet Union poses a potentially mortal threat to the American national interest. That is, rather than accepting that the "Soviet threat" required, and thus explains and justifies, an American policy of containment, these critics contend that American leaders have exaggerated if not invented the Soviet menace to serve their own narrow class and other interests. Further, they maintain that when, for a variety of reasons, the "Cold War cover story" no longer covered, the Nixon and Ford Administrations shifted to a strategy which combines partial superpower duopoly (or co-imperialism) with reliance on new justifications (the need to guarantee raw materials' sources, etc.) for an old pattern of intervention and domination.

The theme of the Soviet menace as myth is a favorite of revisionist historians of the Cold War's origins--like Gabriel and Joyce Kolko who contend that "the perception of the Soviet danger that successive administrations fostered was based largely on . . . the need to maintain a sustaining tension. . . desired for reasons having little if anything to do with Russia."⁷ And the same assumption is also visible in the approach of a more moderate critic like Mary McCarthy who admits that a genuine concern about Communism shaped early Cold War American policy (she chides David Halberstam for "ignoring the reality of Stalin," saying instead that "to have feared the advance of Stalinism . . . was not irrational and immoral. . ."), but insists that after

Stalin's death and particularly after the 20th Party Congress, "some other explanation [for American persistence in containment] must be sought."⁸

What other explanation? On this radical critics are not unanimous. Some present a neo-Marxist-Leninist conception of imperialism as reflecting the needs of a capitalist economy. Others point to a variety of forces--corporate, military, bureaucratic, ideological--which combine to produce American behavior. But virtually all, I think, would agree, first, that the United States has been more sinning than sinned against in the post-war world, second, that American policies have done great damage to ourselves and to other peoples, and third, that the causes of and hence cure for American transgressions are to be found not so much in the external environment as within the United States itself. They agree in short with Richard Barnet that "despite what statesmen say and many citizens believe, foreign policy is more an expression of our own society than a programmed response to what other nations do. Obviously outside events play a role in shaping the national interest but . . . the policies that evolve in response to what goes on in Russia, China, Cuba or anywhere else are primarily a reflection of American habits of mind, American fears, American hopes and American values."⁹

Now, it is not true, although it is often asserted, that Moscow emerges blameless and virtuous in revisionist histories of the Cold War. But despite perpetrating horrors within its own border, the USSR does play the role in the revisionist version of international relations of a distinctly second-class villain. In other words, the Cold War, to radical critics, is more an American than an international problem. The answer to what ails international relations is a drastic reorientation of American foreign policy, which in turn requires a radical restructuring of the American political-economic system, which in turn is a goal which radical critics seek to pursue anyway,

that is apart from its putatively beneficial consequences for the rest of the world. But while radical critics have great hopes and plans they also see obstacles. "We continue to arm against obsolete and remote threats while more immediate dangers threaten to engulf us," declared Barnett in 1973. "The exercise of concentrated and irresponsible power over the affairs of this nation is our greatest national security problem. The threat of tyranny in the United States is real, not a tyranny imposed from Russia, China, or Cuba, but homegrown on American soil. The U.S. economy is becoming increasingly vulnerable to the decisions of foreigners, not because of the machinations of the Russians but because of what we have done to ourselves."¹⁰

Against this background, it should be clear why radical critics decline to hail a reduction of Soviet-American tensions. For radicals, those tensions have been merely the superstructure of the Cold War, which is to say basically derivative and subsidiary. Made mostly in the USA, Cold War tensions were relaxed when it suited American leaders to do so. No reason then to congratulate Kissinger for a change in American tactics, accompanied by extravagant concessions to Washington's new partner in crime.

Hard-Line Critics (Or Anti-Detente Defensists)

The need for a name or label makes for confusion. To label this critique conservative (which in many ways it is) would bring to mind those right-wing Republicans who attacked the Truman Administration's policy of containment and argued instead that a 'forward strategy' was required for protracted conflict with the Soviet Union. But, as revisionist historians among others have correctly pointed out, Harry Truman and Dean Acheson shared with their conservative critics a number of basic premises about the Soviet Union which today unite a diverse coalition of anti-detentists including Henry Jacksonian

Democrats and Reagan Republicans, James Schlesingerian strategists and George Meanyite trade unionists, The National Review, and most but not all of the outspoken Soviet dissidents who have added their voices to the American discussion of detente.

What these hard-line critics (who may also be called anti-detente defensists) have in common is a progression of arguments which is similar in form but opposite in content to the argument made by radical critics. Radical critics see the United States as the major sinner in the post-war period; hard-line critics would pin that the label on the USSR. Radicals find the roots of American misbehavior in the nature of the American system; hard-liners say that Soviet totalitarianism is inherently expansionist. The left says the prerequisite for a meaningful improvement in international relations is a substantial restructuring of the American political economy; anti-detente defensists imply that fundamental liberalization of the Soviet system is a prerequisite for what they call "genuine detente."

If, says George Meany, "detente is the avoidance of nuclear war . . . then I have a question. What is the difference between detente and Cold War? Isn't Cold War also avoidance of hot war?"¹¹ Former Deputy Under Secretary of State Eugene Rostow puts it this way to Henry Kissinger on behalf of the Foreign Policy Task Force of the Coalition for a Democratic Majority: "Here I think, is the heart of our disagreement. Of course we strongly favor any and all relaxations of tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. But we deny that any relaxation of tensions between the two countries has in fact occurred. And we think it is not only wrong, but dangerous to lull Western public opinion by proclaiming an end of the Cold War, a substitution of negotiation for confrontation, and a generation of peace."¹²

If the Soviet leaders favor detente then according to critics, it cannot be genuine. That Moscow equates detente with its old strategy of peaceful coexistence means, according to George Meany that Detente is "simply a new tactic, a new means toward the old end--the world-wide advance of ultimate victory of Communism."¹³ In contrast, Rostow's Task Force lists three steps the Soviets could take in the direction of "true" or "meaningful" detente or "genuinely peaceful coexistence":

- (1) ending the race for military supremacy and reaching agreements for arms limitation based on the principle of parity;
- (2) more humane Soviet attitudes toward the movement of people and ideas, and toward the rule of law; and
- (3) in international politics, mutual and reciprocal respect for the rules of the Charter of the United Nations governing the internal use of force both in conventional and guerilla wars.¹⁴

What kind of detente could George Meany support?

We are for a detente in which the Soviet Union stops its ideological warfare against the West. Only then can we realistically anticipate a relaxation of international tensions.

We are for a detente in which the Soviet Union shows an honest willingness to reverse the arms build-up and to abandon its goal of military superiority in the SALT II negotiations.

We are for a detente in which the flow of Western aid to the East is matched by a free flow of people and ideas in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

We are for a detente in which the Soviet Union will stop sabotaging the efforts to build peace in the Middle East [and] will stop arming and encouraging guerilla movements and other efforts of subversion.¹⁵

If the Soviet Union carried out such measures, would it not have abandoned its current foreign policy? Could such a wholesale alteration happen without a change in the internal political regime? Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn answered these questions in an address to an AFL-CIO-sponsored gathering in Washington. According to Solzhenitsyn there are "three main characteristics of . . . a true detente." First, "there would be disarmament--not only disarmament from the use of war but also from the use of violence . . . to

oppress one's fellow countrymen." Second, "there has to be a guarantee that this will not be broken overnight and for this the other side--the other party to the agreement--must have its acts subject to public opinion, to the press, and to a freely elected parliament." Third, "if we're going to be friends, let's be friends, if we're going to have detente, then let's have detente, and an end to ideological warfare."¹⁶

Solzhenitsyn, it could be said, is more a moralist than a "realpolitician." But while the case for fundamental change in the Soviet system certainly can stand on moral grounds alone, no less a political figure than Senator Jackson has associated himself with the equation of liberalization and true detente.¹⁷ And no less a defender of real politics than theorist Hans Morgenthau has declared that "a government that cuts itself off from objective contact with the outside world, that becomes prisoner of its own propaganda, cannot pursue a foreign policy one can rely on to recognize, let alone respect those self-imposed moral limitations that are the basis of a viable balance of power policy." From which it follows, Morgenthau has argued, that "if the Kremlin abated its present totalitarian practices by allowing its people a modicum of freedom of movement, it would be taking the first step toward joining . . . a system that would itself be a manifestation of detente...."¹⁸

Which raises the question of exactly how likely such changes are to come about? The Jackson Amendment, which was designed to effect the beginning of such change, failed. But the full dimensions of the problem are best clarified by hard-line critics' own analysis of Soviet reality. Like radical analysts of American foreign policy, they find the roots of Soviet behavior to be multiple and deep. They attach particular significance to Marxist-Leninist ideology with its long-term commitment to the spread of revolution, and its built-in suspiciousness of Western capitalist powers. They trace the influence of traditionally Russian xenophobia which, far from disappearing in the

Revolution, implanted itself deeper still in Soviet thought and action. They point to the Stalinist training of the current Soviet elite, and to the very nature of a totalitarian system which, in the absence of genuinely democratic elections, must depend for its legitimacy on the Communist Party's leadership of international communism and the spread of Soviet state influence. They are even sensitive to the irony that the dissidents who seek fundamental change within the USSR are few and weak while the masses of Russian people seem all too ready to go along, actively or passively, with both the existing system and its foreign policy.¹⁹

The irony is this. Hard-line critics call for basic shifts in Soviet behavior. Yet they themselves show how deeply rooted in the nature and history of the Soviet system are the policies and actions which they seek to modify. Now this paradox can be accommodated by champions of detente who, as we shall soon see, endorse it precisely as a way of managing relations with a hostile power which is not about to change its basic ways. But where does the prospect for "no change" leave the critics? It leaves them, I believe, in the position of offering the vision of "genuine detente" to those who require happy endings, while in fact girding themselves and if possible American foreign policy for a protracted conflict with a mortal enemy. In other words, "genuine detente" recedes from the practical agenda, to be replaced by a set of prescriptions for dealing with Moscow which in turn reflect a zero-sum view of the Soviet-American relationship.

A zero-sum relationship, for those uninitiated in game theory, is one in which a gain for either side constitutes a loss for the other. The view of the Soviet-American game as zero-sum reflects a set of critical assumptions about Soviet intentions (that they are inevitably hostile), about Soviet capabilities (that they are disturbingly formidable), and about the

consequences for American interests of Soviet successes (that they would be negative, serious and sustained). Concerning Soviet intentions, we have already heard the opinion of George Meany. But it is only fair to add that Mr. Meany was explicating texts of Mr. Brezhnev--one a 1967 speech in which the Soviet leader noted that whereas an undiluted cold war atmosphere "seriously hampers the activity of revolutionary democratic forces," in "conditions of slackened international tensions, the pointer of the political barometer moves left", and another in 1970 in which Brezhnev boasted that "the Soviet Union is on the offensive and the West on the defensive; the impact of our ideology is tremendous; it is mounting with every day, undermining the mainstay of the non-Soviet system from within."²⁰

Even more than on an alarmed view of Soviet intentions, however, the anti-detente case rests on concern over Moscow's capabilities. In the world of defense strategists (professional and otherwise), information about intent is "soft" data (especially when an adversary's intentions are interpreted as defensive or otherwise benign). A rational defense, it is said, will pay less attention to what a potential enemy wants to do, and more to what he can do, on the assumption that sooner or later he will want to do something unpleasant. Which of Moscow's capabilities cause particular anxiety? Readers of the daily press are familiar with the warnings of Senator Jackson, James Schlesinger and others that the Soviet Union has caught up with and is overtaking the United States in overall defense spending, and in crucial categories of strategic and conventional hardware. Further, critics of detente assume that Moscow will sooner or later rattle its nuclear sabers as a means of obtaining political influence commensurate with its growing military might.²¹ Finally, it is assumed that successful extensions of Moscow's influence can only come at the expense of the West whether the cost is a tangible loss of military bases, raw materials or shipping lanes, or the sort of psychological setback which follow when an

area which has been part of the West or at least non-aligned comes under predominant Soviet influence.²²

Now it should be added immediately that hard-line critics have no monopoly on a somber view of Soviet behavior and the potential consequences thereof. As we shall soon see, Henry Kissinger proceeds from quite similar assumptions about Soviet intentions and capabilities, and even liberal defenders of detente have a far from benevolent view of Soviet foreign policy. But what distinguishes hard-line critics is their assumption that Soviet policy is essentially unmodifiable (except in that happy ending mentioned above)--whereas the Nixon and Ford Administrations have been engaged in what amounts to an effort at limited modification, and left liberals seem to believe that Soviet behavior need not be modified at all.

What is hard-line critics' preferred policy for dealing with the Soviet Union? It amounts to a continuation of containment based primarily on negative sanctions. If Moscow promotes increased economic intercourse with the West it must be seeking, say hard-line critics, to keep its civilian sector afloat while it devotes a grossly disproportionate amount of resources to the continuing military build-up. In that case, it should be American policy to go very slow on East-West commerce (which critics say--very quietly in Iowa--is not all that important to us anyway), except when we condition trade on Soviet political concessions either in the area of foreign policy (say in the Middle East, Portugal, or Angola), or the field of human rights (see the Jackson Amendment). If Moscow is willing to sign a SALT agreement, that is prima facie evidence that the pact will not block the Soviet drive for superiority but will retard American effort to keep pace. Hence the critics recommend a more rapid increase in defense spending, tougher bargaining at SALT, and timely reminders to the Soviets of American firmness

of will--in short, a policy of keeping our powder plentiful and visible as well as dry. Nor would critics neglect lesser opportunities--for example the opportunity to greet Solzhenitsyn on the White House lawn and thereby demonstrate commitment, or the negative opportunity to abstain from such Soviet-American projects as the joint space flight which critics say add to Soviet prestige without any commensurate gain--scientific or otherwise--for the U.S. Finally, critics put down the Administration for devoting so much attention to "non-genuine" detente that it neglects the crucial job of mending fences with loyal allies and potentially friendly, or at any rate oil-rich, neutrals. To the unsuspecting eye, this criticism looks deceptively like that which some liberals have directed against Henry Kissinger. But although Henry Jackson and Edward Kennedy both recommend a more activist American policy in West-West and North-South relations, Jackson has his mind on the main East-West game, while Kennedy we shall see does not.

In Defense of Detente (Or Pro-Detente Defensists)

James Reston, in the same not-for-direct-attribution interview with Secretary Kissinger quoted earlier, notes, "the irony. . . that Kissinger, who is accused of being too easy on the Soviets, actually is more cynical about them and expects less from them than many of his critics."

To the degree that his hard-line critics (and radicals and liberals too) do believe in happy endings, Reston's interviewee is correct. For Secretary Kissinger does appear to proceed on the assumption that "genuine detente" (or what might more accurately be labelled quasi-detente) is the kind of chimera which responsible statesmen do not pursue as a matter of national policy. In fact, Kissinger might say, it is precisely because "true detente" is an illusion that "just plain detente" is a necessity. Or, as the Secretary

did put it to a Senate Committee, "Detente, as we see it, is not rooted in agreement on values; it becomes above all necessary because each side recognizes that the other is a potential adversary in nuclear war. To us, detente is a process of managing relations with a potentially hostile country in order to preserve peace while maintaining our vital interests,. . . an objective not without moral validity--it may indeed be the most profound imperative of all."²³

Happy endings aside, however, the game of competitive cynicism between Kissinger and his critics becomes more complicated. On the one hand, Kissinger seems more hopeful about the Russians--in that whereas his critics would rely mainly on negative sanctions, Kissinger has employed a carrot-and-stick approach with the emphasis on the carrot in recent years. But on the other hand, Kissinger's critics seem to assume that the Soviet Union will go along with a game which offers them few if any positive incentives, whereas the Administration believes that the Soviets are quite capable of abandoning the game entirely and reverting to the Cold War stance of aggressive isolation which would be much more dangerous in an era when the relative balance of power is shifting in their favor.

To an argument like the latter, anti-detente defensists might reply that since detente constitutes no great gain (but in fact accounts for a series of setbacks) its demise would be no great loss. But whatever the actual worth of detente (about which more below), the fact that Nixon, Ford and Kissinger have devoted so much attention to it (at the cost, critics say, of shortchanging allies and neglecting other important international issues) suggests that they, like their hard-line critics, see the Soviet Union as the primary international problem facing the United States. Which in turn reflects the fact that Administration assumption about Soviet

intentions, capabilities and the consequences thereof are not unlike those of anti-detente defensists. To be sure, statesmen speak somewhat more diplomatically than does George Meany, but beginning in President Nixon's first State of the World Message and continuing in innumerable later statements, Administration spokesmen have expressed the view that Soviet intentions, rooted as they are in Communist ideology and Russian history, are inevitably hostile, and Soviet capabilities increasingly formidable. As to the consequences of a failure to restrain Moscow, these are taken very seriously by Kissinger, but in a way characteristically reflecting the framework he long ago erected for understanding international relations.

In his very first book (A World Restored) Kissinger set forth his model. He wrote then as he often has since of the crucial importance of international stability on which the possibility of peace depends. The most dangerous threat to stability was a revolutionary power which would not accept the international order as legitimate. "To be sure, the motivation of the revolutionary power may well be defensive," he went on in words which must have been intended to fit Russia as well as Napoleonic France, "it may well be sincere in its protestations of feeling threatened. But the distinguishing feature of a revolutionary power is not that it feels threatened--such feeling is inherent in the nature of international relations based on sovereign states--but that nothing can reassure it. Only absolute security--the neutralization of the opponent--is considered a sufficient guarantee, and thus the desire of one power for absolute ^{security} means absolute insecurity for all the others."²⁴

"Diplomacy, the art of restraining the exercise of power, cannot function in such an environment," Kissinger went on. Yet successful

diplomacy he would say, is more than ever needed in an era characterized by proliferation not only of nuclear weapons but also of sovereign states and the conflicts which inevitably go with them. Kissinger's later writings explicitly developed the conception of the Soviet Union as a revolutionary power. And since 1969 many of his and his President's speeches are nothing less than lectures to the Soviet leaders on the importance of their recognizing their own stake in international stability.²⁵ In the last three years or so, Kissinger has opened himself (about how more below) to the sort of headline which recently introduced a Wall Street Journal editorial--"Real Carrot, Rhetorical Stick."²⁶ But in the first three years of the Nixon Presidency the lectures to Moscow were accompanied by a stress on the stick.

The biggest stick of all was fashioned exquisitely and subtly in China. And though it is well worn by now, the technique of lone secret talks in Peking followed by short "uncommuniques" is still a wonderful way of suggesting to the nervous Soviets that they hedge against the unknown to the East of them by being relatively nice to those West of them. But the Chinese stick was only one among several which were "indirected" at Moscow in those days, and the others were, to put it mildly, less exquisite and subtle. There was, for example, the Cambodian intervention. "It is, of course, nonsense," Kissinger told Marvin and Bernard Kalb, "to say that we did what we did in Cambodia in order to impress the Russians in the Middle East. It was not as simple as that. But we certainly have to keep in mind that the Russians will judge us by the general purposefulness of our performance everywhere. What they are doing in the Middle East, whatever their intentions, poses the gravest threats in the long run for Western Europe and Japan and therefore for us."²⁷

There was also the Jordan affair during the summer of 1970 in which, alarmed by Soviet behavior, Nixon and Kissinger sent Israeli tanks up to the line against Soviet-supported Syria with the assurance that the United States would intervene against Soviet (or Egyptian) troops if they moved against Israel. And Jordan was followed in relatively short order by other moves which the Administration deemed of symbolic importance--loud alarms at the possibility of a Soviet nuclear sub-marine base in Cienfuegos, Cuba; a display of gunboat diplomacy aimed at Russia as well as India during the India-Pakistan war; and Haiphong mining followed by Christmas bombing--again too simple to say that these were designed only or even mainly for Soviet consumption, but not far off the mark to suggest that the mining reflected Nixon's belief that Brezhnev was not being as "helpful" in Vietnam as he had implied he would be, and that the bombing warned communists in Moscow, Peking and Hanoi that Nixon was capable of strong action when he felt his interests threatened."²⁸

Between 1969 and 1971, it was Nixon and Kissinger who were the primary obstacle to the expansion of East-West trade which a majority of Congress seemed ready to set in motion. But in retrospect it is clear that the Administration was dangling the carrot even while it wielded the stick, and by the time of the 1972 summit it was ready to add to illustrated lectures a variety of sweeteners ranging from technology and grain to the various luxury items which General Secretary Brezhnev received as personal gifts. These and many others form part of the web of positive and negative incentives which, in Secretary Kissinger's opinion, have led Moscow to begin "to practice foreign policy--at least partially--as a relationship between states rather than as Civil war."²⁹ And once Moscow begins to practice foreign policy that way then the Soviet-American relationship is not, for Secretary Kissinger, a zero-sum game. He believes that genuine

nuclear superiority is a very distant (but perhaps not totally illusory goal), but that the race for such superiority could erode the security of both the US and USSR. He may agree with hard-line critics that trade offers Moscow some things which it could not easily obtain elsewhere or produce at home, but he also contends that the other side of the coin could be a healthy Soviet sense of at least partial dependence on commerce with the West. Back in 1969-1971, Nixon and Kissinger wielded the economic weapon in roughly the way their hard-line critics recommend-- that is, they conditioned an increase in trade on constructive Soviet action in Vietnam, Berlin and elsewhere. But since then, the Administration appears to have shifted to a long-run strategy of counting on Moscow's increasing involvement with Western economies to make the Soviets hesitate before throwing their military and political weight around at the West's expense. Or at least the latter interpretation could explain the pattern visible in the Portugal and Angola cases of speaking loudly (and sending money) but carrying a small stick (that is, hesitating to apply negative diplomatic or economic sanctions against Moscow itself).

That Nixon and Kissinger have justified detente in rather extravagant terms (c.f. "structure of peace" and "generation of peace") is well known (and a particular source of annoyance to hard-line critics who fear that such talk will tempt the West to lower its guard). But a number of the Secretary's worst fears are as revealing if not more revealing of his understanding of detente than his highest hopes.

A first fear concerns the Soviet-American balance of power and will. Kissinger fears that "in the next decade, as Soviet power grows--and it will not grow as a result of detente, but as a result of technology and economic development--the temptation to achieve political positions commensurate with that /....p. 20

power may also grow."³⁰ Yet in the same period, the United States will continue to experience a reaction against Vietnam and Watergate which takes the form of widespread skepticism--in Congress and out--about the need to take forceful action to oppose Soviet power around the world. Kissinger's "worst-case" fear is that someday--he might say it almost happened during the 1973 October War in the Mideast--the Soviets will push forward in a place that really matters to the United States and we will respond either with resistance which risks nuclear confrontation, or with a yawn which invites further Soviet expansion. "For us to run the risk of a confrontation that will be considered by our people as unnecessary is to invite massive foreign policy defeats," Kissinger has said.³¹ And yet to seem unwilling to risk confrontation is to invite confrontation. This is the dilemma with which detente, the strategy of "regulating our relationships"³² with minimum risk of confrontation, is designed to cope. It is also the situation which prompted James Schlesinger to claim the label, "optimist," because he has faith the American people would respond to a call to resist Soviet expansion, while Henry Kissinger, Schlesinger said, had convinced himself that such a response would not be forthcoming.

A second fear, which appears to lie behind the pattern of speaking loudly but carrying a small stick, is the fear that a hard-line reaction to every piece of Soviet obstreperousness might risk nothing less than a return to the Cold War." . . . detente can come to seem so natural that it appears safe to levy progressively greater demands upon it," warned Kissinger in 1973. "The temptation to combine detente with increasing pressure on the Soviet Union will grow. Such an attitude will be disastrous. We would not accept it from Moscow; Moscow will not accept it from us.

We will finally wind up with the Cold War and fail to achieve either peace or any human goal."³³

The rhetoric is hyperbolic but the conviction appears real. The Soviets have practiced autarchy combined with militancy before and they might decide to take that road again. The current generation of Soviet leaders, which lived through the Second World War, has a healthy fear of war, but the next might decide that taking greater risks could advance Soviet interests more effectively than paying with restraint for positive incentives from the West. Such a scenario seems far-fetched but it accounts, I think, for one more generally unnoticed irony in the detente debate. That is, that whereas the Administration's hard-line critics are alarmed that the United States is giving away too much to the Soviets, the Administration has been concerned that we may not be offering Moscow enough.

Liberal Defenders of Detente (Or Left-Liberal Limitationists)

Symptomatic of the liberal or better to say, left-liberal is the title of an article by Senator Edward M. Kennedy which appeared in Foreign Policy in 1974. Writing at a time when detente was only barely off the ground, Kennedy took as his theme the need to go "Beyond Detente."³⁴ To a casual reader, the piece echoes with Kissingerian formulations. "The first phase of improving U.S.-Soviet relations, which developed over more than a decade, provided a buffer against the Cold War and greatly reduced the risks of nuclear war and confrontation."³⁵ (Note the Senator's effort, as a good Democrat--and a good Kennedy--to spread the credit for detente over a ten-year period.) "There is still a risk of slipping back and losing much of what we have achieved,"³⁶ but the risk can be minimized by a policy of positive as well as negative incentives. "On the

one hand, we must be ready to meet real Soviet challenges that could, indeed, threaten our vital interests or those of our close allies."³⁷ But in the long run, "as they become increasingly dependent upon Western economic cooperation on a regular and continuing basis, they will face greater pressures to modify their political behavior."³⁸ Even regarding human rights, on which some pro-detente liberals had previously joined with anti-detente liberal Henry Jackson, Kennedy in 1974, cautiously combined a call for "repeated appeals to standards of human decency" with the warning that we be "cautious about interfering in one another's society (sic), if only because of the risks to fundamental political and strategic understandings."³⁹

But then the resemblance between Kissinger and Kennedy blurs. For although Kennedy affirms that "we cannot afford to be indifferent to enduring critical East-West issues, or succumb to the temptation to rest on past achievements in reducing the risk of war," for him "the true test" in U.S.-Soviet relations "will lie in our mutual ability and willingness to face the truly great challenges to mankind for the balance of the century: challenges of food, of fuel, of population, of sharing resources, and of the need for a broader sense of social justice toward the poor countries."⁴⁰ And for this to happen "it will be important for U.S. relations with the Soviet Union to lose much of their exceptional quality. As much as possible, they must continue to evolve into a series of discrete acts and accommodations that do not have to be at center stage, preempting time and attention that is also needed elsewhere in meeting the great political and economic problems facing the world that go far beyond East-West relations."⁴¹

That the new agenda of global issues is real and important, a defensist analyst (whether of pro-or anti-detente variety) might readily admit..

But although Jackson and Kissinger are obviously aware of the global agenda, the Secretary is more concerned about falling out of detente than moving beyond it, and the Senator isn't about to move into it. How, then, do liberals like Kennedy justify their position? This is where their different assumptions about intentions, capabilities and the consequences thereof come in.

Senator Jackson, we have seen, views the Soviets as locked by their ideology and background into an attitude of unremitting hostility toward the United States. Henry Kissinger is more willing to allow for defensive motivation on Moscow's part, but believes, as do his hard-line critics, that capabilities and consequences count for more than intentions.⁴² But left liberal supporters of detente share with radical critics the view that Soviet intentions are largely, although not entirely, defensive and believe furthermore this is a datum which American policy ought to take into account. For his part, Senator Kennedy admits that "the Soviet Union will no doubt continue to challenge the United States as a world power."⁴³ But in the much-heralded "great debate" on the U.S. foreign and military policy which took place in the Senate in June 1975, Senator McGovern waxed confident that the Soviet military build-up was intended to deal with the Chinese threat. And he seemed less than impressed with his Georgia colleague Sam Nunn's counter that since the American military was designed with an eye to Soviet capabilities rather than intentions, then in effect detente was really irrelevant to the matter of building and deploying the force structure.⁴⁴

Nor, however, are liberals all that concerned about Soviet capabilities either. As a general proposition, they appear to believe that Moscow's capacities are significantly over-rated, particularly by a Pentagon which has a vested interest in portraying its Soviet counterpart in such a way

as to evoke more dollars at budget time. Far from being ten feet tall, the Soviets have a record of stumbling and bumbling which reflects both their own ineptitude (a classic case being a Soviet aid shipment of snowplows to a would-be client in sub-Saharan Africa), as well as the unmanageability of the issues they seek to manage and the areas in which they try^{to}/operate. When then Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger brought forth statistics on comparative military spending, liberals questioned not only the methodology of assigning dollar figures to Soviet expenditures but even more the military and political significance of the weaponry Moscow is buying. When Henry Kissinger bends every effort to dissuade the Soviets from racing for nuclear superiority (and gets no thanks from Jacksonians who had warned of just such a race but now refuse to accept that SALT agreements significantly inhibit Moscow), left-liberals take a more relaxed attitude. To them strategic superiority is an illusion and so for the most part is the prospect that Moscow will use the appearance of superiority for political advantage. Strategic parity to the liberals is a gross category encompassing a wide range of permissible differences between the Soviet and American nuclear (and conventional) arsenals. As long as the United States maintains the assured capacity to retaliate against a Soviet first strike, Moscow will be deterred from striking first; nor are the Soviets likely to take lesser risks which carry with them the possibility of a war which might not remain limited. Writes Senator Kennedy, ". . . a major difference in numbers of nuclear weapons can have political significance. It can shape the way we and the Russians would behave in a crisis. It can even make more likely a mutually-sucidal war by mistake. But this tends to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. The more attention we and others pay to these differences in number, the more likely they are to have political

effects, and the harder it will be to break the spiral of arms."⁴⁵ And George Kennan goes so far as to say that the nuclear "numbers game" is the kind of mathematics which he finds "wholly unacceptable" since "in an environment of grotesque capacity for overskill on both sides, such calculations of relative numbers lose, to my mind, all significance."⁴⁶

One of the nightmares of both The National Review and the Administration is that the Soviets will attempt to force their will upon third parties to which the new Soviet "white water" navy gives Moscow access. Yet this prospect, too, seems less than apocalyptic to those who now apply to the Soviet Union a lesson learned in Vietnam--namely that superpowers have great difficulty translating military power into political control over distant countries. Some years ago, Senator Fulbright delivered himself of an ironic put-down of the fear that the Soviets would come to dominate the Mediterranean: "Would the Russians close the Mediterranean to foreign shipping? Prohibit fishing? Use it as a vacation resort?"⁴⁷ And observers who are that untroubled about the Mediterranean are even less likely to be concerned about a place like Angola--concerning which Senator Dick Clark of Iowa told the Washington Post "that he is not particularly concerned about the prospect of a Soviet-backed faction winning out if the United States were to stop its support." Said Clark: "The history of Soviet intervention in Africa is one of almost total failure. . . . If the MPLA wins, the Soviets will be lucky if they can hang on for a year or two."⁴⁸

So far we have been examining the liberal assumption that the Soviets are not supermen. But suppose they exceed expectations. In that case, left-liberals will argue that the consequences for American interests are not likely to be as serious as Jackson and Kissinger fear, and that in any case there is probably not much we can do to keep the Soviets from trying their luck. One reason for liberal confidence is the belief (already

mentioned) that near-term Soviet successes are likely to backfire--with Egypt the proof that what happened to us in Indochina can happen to them too. Another argument is that the very global issues which liberals say demand increased American attention are precisely the sort which are likely to prevent Moscow from accumulating influence and using it to our detriment. Item: The Soviets are almost totally irrelevant to the range of economic issues which are presently being negotiated between the advanced industrial countries of the North and the third and fourth worlds of the South, a fact symbolized by the way the USSR stood on the sideline at last September's Special UN Assembly. Item: It could be argued persuasively that the decline in recent years of American prestige in Latin America has been accompanied by an increase in the Soviet presence there but not really by enhanced Soviet influence--precisely because the name of the game south of the border is largely "balance of payments" and the Soviets, with a faltering economy and a big deficit of their own, have little or nothing to contribute.

So much for assumptions. Next the left-liberal prescription. On matters military, liberals differ from both pro-and anti-detente defensists by favoring a more or less minimum strategic deterrence, and a further scaling down of conventional forces. Concerning commerce, they share neither the hard-line fear that trade will bolster Soviet economic and military might, nor the sense of urgency with which the Administration seeks through trade to render Soviet power benign. Many liberals supported the Jackson Amendment, but in the aftermath of its failure they ask why Washington should not simply let trade take its own course in response to economic factors rather than political considerations. Like hard-line critics, liberals defenders of detente have chided the Administration for its lack of attention to other than East-

West issues. But whereas hard-liners would mend North-South and West-West fences largely in order to fence in Moscow, liberals would attend to the global agenda for its own sake. Thus, when Senator Fulbright found himself "in agreement with the Administration on the wisdom of detente with the Soviet Union, but in disagreement on certain underlying concepts of what the national interest is and is not," he meant that he would have the President pay more heed to "the seemingly intractable problems of poverty and population growth in the third world," to the "need to restore economic health at home," and to "the continuing significance of the all-but-forgotten promise of the United Nations" which, in Fulbright's Wilsonian conception of the national interest, "ought to be at the very center of foreign policy and not at the far periphery."⁴⁹

Or, as George Kennan put it in a passage that can serve as summary:

Since the end of the Second World War we have been accustomed to seeing in the phenomenon of international Communism the greatest single danger on our international horizon--the overriding problem to which our strategy and diplomacy had to be addressed. This had at one time its justification--a more serious justification than many of our critics at home and abroad have been willing to concede. But this justification is now fading; and it seems to me that we are already faced with several other dangers even more disturbing than this one--dangers which could, and soon will, preempt the major portion of our attention and concern. I am thinking here not just of the grave conflicts and tensions that exist in other parts of the world, such as the Middle East and Southern Africa, to which world Communism has only a peripheral relationship. I am thinking even more of the world-wide problems of energy shortage, environmental deterioration; overpopulation, and the urgent need for international collaboration in protecting the seas from over-exploitation and pollution

We cannot solve all these problems on a worldwide scale. We will be doing enough if we can protect the progress of our national life in the face of them. But if we could divert to their solution some of the attention and resources we are now devoting to military defense in the face of international Communism, and if we could enlist the help of some of the Communist countries in this task, then I think not only would we be using our energies and resources in a more realistic way, but we might find that the problem of international Communism would itself be diminished with the shift in our attention, and theirs, away from the fears and habits that divide us and toward the problems that are common to us all.⁵⁰

Evaluation

The Past

What, if anything, is the achievement of detente? The most oft-encountered answer is, a relaxation of tensions. But that impresses neither radical nor hard-line critics, and meanwhile Administration and liberal defenders of detente seem unconvinced by each other's arguments for the policy they both seem to support.

So let me speak in defense of a relaxation of Soviet-American tensions in a less familiar way. Let me do so by distinguishing between what, for lack of a more suitable vocabulary, I will call excessive, unnecessary and irrational tensions ^{and those tensions} which could be considered inevitable or even necessary and rational. My argument, in short, is that the worst of the Cold War involved excessive, unnecessary or irrational tensions and that it is the achievement of detente to have reduced tensions to a level which, although still fairly high, is probably inevitable given the countries, histories and circumstances involved. Detente has not, in other words, ushered in a generation of peace if peace is defined as the absence of cold as well as hot war. Detente is, someone has paraphrased Clauswitz, "a continuation of the Cold War by other means." But if the means can spare us repetition of several traumas and tragedies which occurred between 1947 and 1972, they will be worthy of praise.

To make this case, let me next distinguish four broadly defined periods of post-war Soviet-American relations. The first extending from 1945 to the mid-1950s encompasses the Cold War's origins and rapid early development. This is the period which has occasioned the hot debate between revisionist and orthodox historians, the latter laying blame on the Soviet

Union and the former shifting guilt to the United States. But what strikes post-revisionist observers (among whom I would count myself) as more important than the effort to allocate blame, is the fact that during these years, and particularly the early post-war years, there were truly significant issues in conflict between the two sides, particularly those involving the near chaotic situation in Europe which appeared to threaten vital interests of both. One could expand upon this theme by arguing that it was not only understandable that Americans feared Soviet designs on Western Europe, but only slightly less understandable that Stalin feared Western penetration into the East European zone which he thought wartime battles and agreements had given over to him. But the major point is that in comparison with the tensions which were to come later, these early fears seem inevitable, unavoidable, even rational on both sides.⁵¹ Yet very quickly these fears and tensions were overlaid and aggravated by excessive tensions-- those stemming on the Soviet side from Stalin's personal paranoia plus all those other sources of Soviet suspiciousness to which hard-line critics of detente correctly direct our attention; and those found in their pure American form on the far right but partially visible as well, I would argue, in the tendency of Acheson and Dulles to exaggerate Soviet power and underestimate Moscow's weakness; to use the maxim, "negotiate only from strength," as an excuse not to negotiate; and to miss chances to score points if not to conclude agreements with Moscow out of a conviction that, as Dean Acheson put it in February 1950, dealing with the Russians is "like trying to deal with a force of nature. You can't argue with a river, it is going to flow. You can dam it up, you can put it to useful purposes, you can deflect it, but you can't argue with it."⁵²

The second period runs roughly from 1957 to 1962, from Khrushchev's accession to what many thought then was full power, to the Cuban Missile crisis. The point I wish to make about this period is that although some of the most burning issues over which the Cold War began should have been put to rest, and in some ways had been put to rest by this time, and although Stalin was gone and the torch passed to a new generation of Americans, nonetheless these were the years during which heightened fears and tensions brought the world closer to nuclear war than it has ever been. By 1960, the West had conceded by its actions if not by its words that East Europe was Moscow's to have and to hold by armed intervention if necessary. Meanwhile, Western Europe had recovered from early post-war paralysis to the point where it could hardly be viewed rationally as an easy mark for the predator to the East. To be sure, Moscow and Washington continued to fear each other's intentions and capabilities in Europe, and in addition they managed to extend what both still saw as their zero-sum competition into the third world as well. But the fact that they did so owes less, I think, to any fundamental conflicts of interests in those areas (it is easier to say in retrospect than it was in 1960 that the Congo was not the be-all and end-all of world history, but not that much easier), and more to the fact that both sides were so locked into mutual suspiciousness that the main thing they wanted to communicate to each other was something like "Don't underestimate my determination," and the primary way they found to say it was through actions which had the effects of increasing the level of tension.

Let us examine the pattern of those years in more detail. Zbigniew Brzezinski has described them as a period of American advantage over the Soviet Union in every major component of power and influence--"international standing, military power, economic power and domestic base."⁵³ More important (than an American political scientist's retrospective evaluation)

is the fact that the Soviet leaders, despite confidence in the ultimate victory of their cause, apparently shared the view that they were acting largely from a position of objective weakness. That this was indeed Khrushchev's sense of things I have argued at some length elsewhere;⁵⁴ but in this approach to the outside world Khrushchev went to great lengths to conceal Soviet weakness and to project instead the impression of confidence based on strength. He parlayed actual strategic inferiority into the impression of superiority (in part/ ^{by} having the same squadron of bombers circle several times over the heads of Western military attaches on high Soviet holidays); he deliberately fostered the image of a missile gap in Moscow's favor and tried for an anti-missile gap as well ("I used to say in my speeches that we had developed an anti-missile missile that could hit a fly, but of course that was just rhetoric to make our adversaries think twice.")⁵⁵ he rattled nuclear sabers over Suez and ultimata over Berlin; his ringing endorsement of "wars of national liberation" (on January 6, 1961) was doubtless mainly intended for international communist consumption, but to the intently listening entourage of John Kennedy "under the canonical beat of the language, the oration sounded a brutal joy over a world where democracy was everywhere in retreat and communism everywhere on the march."⁵⁶ And then there was the stormy meeting in Vienna at which Khrushchev blustered, bluffed and browbeat to the point that Kennedy departed hoping fervently but none too confidently that he had won Khrushchev's respect, while Khrushchev's reaction, as recorded in his Memoirs, was--"A man like this I could respect. I think he respected me too."⁵⁷

Kennedy's response to Khrushchev's January 6 speech came in references to Russia and China in his State of the Union address: "We must never be lulled into believing that either power has yielded its ambitions for world domination--ambitions which they forcefully restated only a short time ago. On the contrary, our task is to convince them that aggression and subversion will not be profitable routes to pursue these ends."⁵⁸

But how to convince Khrushchev? Part of the answer was to correct his apparent impression that the Soviet Union could face down the new Administration. And the way to do this was not only to energize American policy in fact, but also to persuade Khrushchev that although he might see the balance as tipping in Moscow's favor, Kennedy was fully confident that the United States continued to lead. At the center of the Soviet-American relationship, in other words, was Kennedy's image of Khrushchev's image of Kennedy's image of himself. It was this chain of perceptions which led Kennedy to conclude, in Schlesinger's words, that "the time might come/^{when} he would have to run the supreme risk to convince Khrushchev that conciliation did not mean humiliation." Or as the President told an interviewer: "If Khrushchev wants to rub my nose in the dirt, it's all over." Or as he said on another occasion: "That son of a bitch won't pay any attention to words. He has to see you move."⁵⁹

This is not the place to explore all the ways and places in which Kennedy moved. Suffice it to mention his build-up of strategic and conventional military power (the former after the missile gap had been discovered to be nonexistent or rather in U.S. favor); his standing firm in Berlin; his standing even firmer in the Cuban Missile Crisis

(during which Kennedy took what he regarded as "the supreme risk," or at least a one in three version of it);⁶⁰ and finally his escalating in Indochina in part because he wanted to demonstrate toughness not only to Hanoi and Peking but to Moscow as well.⁶¹ To be sure, these and other American moves had their logic (or illogic) apart from Kennedy's concern about Khrushchev's image of him. But to the extent that the chain of images did exist in the form described here, and did play a role in motivating American policy, then it is fair to say that tensions which were arguably excessive, unnecessary and irrational were directly linked to some of the most dangerous and tragic episodes in the entire post-war period.

The Cuban missile crisis itself is the epitome. Somehow Khrushchev resolved on perhaps the looniest of all his "hare-brained schemes." Somehow Kennedy failed to give or at any rate Khrushchev failed to get the message that placing offensive missiles in Cuba might be strenuously resisted. Most of Kennedy's advisers including his Secretary of Defense agreed that the missiles counted for little in the overall military balance, but given all the signalling and counter-signalling of firmness and will that had gone before, they thought the political-psychological impact of permitting the missiles to remain was dangerous enough to justify incurring what Kennedy considered so great a risk of nuclear war.

The Cuba crisis was--Ted Kennedy is right--a turning point. Shaken by how close they thought they had come to the brink, Kennedy and Khrushchev shrank back. But although the test-ban agreement and the 1963 wheat deal were harbingers, and although the Johnson Administration strove for a kind of detente, the period between 1962 and 1969 are best seen as a kind of interregnum in U.S.-Soviet relations caused in part by the difficulty of doing

business during the Vietnam war.

And so we arrive at the fourth period, 1969 to the present, during which, against a background of increasing Soviet military power and global political activity plus American retreat from Indochina, the Nixon and Ford Administrations adopt the policy of "arguing with the river" which previous Administrations either avoided on principle or never really got to conduct. And now we are in a position to say what is new and valuable about detente. Its major achievement, I believe, is that the Soviets have pledged to refrain and so far have refrained from the sorts of actions which, with their opposite if not equal American reactions, made for the worst of the Cold War. To be more specific, they have refrained from massive Cuban-style deception and Berlin-type pressure, and have eschewed the sort of saber-rattling and military blackmail which could indeed confront the United States with a choice between a strategic confrontation with all its risks and harmful side-effects, and a retreat which would encourage the Soviets to try blackmail again. (Hard-line critics of detente say that the Soviet role in the 1973 Middle East war constituted precisely the sort of adventure detente is supposed to avoid. But even if it were analogous to the Cuban crisis--which I believe it is not--one could argue that of all the areas of the world the Middle East is one in which the stakes are so important to both sides as to suggest that high tensions in that area are, for the time being at least, inevitable. Whereas in Korea and Cuba, two areas in which a recurrence of past tensions would be clearly irrational, Moscow has within limits been exercising restraint.)

Another achievement of detente is more purely psychological. It can be appreciated by comparing the Vienna meeting between Kennedy and Khrushchev with the Nixon-Brzhnev summits. Much fun has been made of Mr. Nixon's

claim--which so obviously served his Watergate cause--that he had broken through to a uniquely effective personal relationship with the Soviet leaders. Yet no one who has read Arthur Schlesinger's account of ^{the} Vienna summit and contemplated the after-effects mentioned above, should lightly dismiss those 46, count-'em, 46 hours of "personal encounter" which Nixon and Brezhnev had at the first Moscow summit, and particularly the impression which Henry Kissinger reported his boss gleaned from the meeting:

We have found that the Russians have a far wider sense of global responsibility than we thought. They move with more deliberation than we supposed. They have more insight into the policy implications of their actions than we imagined. We had with them on arms control, the kind of sophisticated talk I thought could only occur in Cambridge.⁶²

It is unlikely that radical or hard-line critics will be convinced by this defense of detente, but neither need we be overly impressed by their own counter-attacks. Radicals will repeat that the tensions whose relaxation constitutes the major achievement of detente were an artificial superstructure in the first place. But this will not be the first nor probably the last time radicals underestimate the importance and endurance of superstructure. Hard-line critics will reassert that tensions have not in fact relaxed at all since the basic Soviet animus toward the West persists, and that the only reason Moscow is going along with the charade is that it can better pursue its primary aim of undermining the West in an era of apparently reduced tension. Such critics are correct that the Cold War is not over. Indeed, Moscow itself is the first to contend that detente has not halted and cannot halt the movement of historical forces which bring different social systems into competition. But is it really so clear that the Soviet have the advantage in a "Cold War by other means?" Must it be the case, as hard-

line critics imply, that a higher level of tensions is positively required if the West is not to forfeit the game? Is there no way for the United States to welcome a reduction of excessive tensions and at the same time compete with Moscow with resolution and success? It is to these questions that the next and last part of this paper is devoted.

The Future

Perhaps the best way to approach the problem of prescription is to go back to the differing assumptions about the Soviet Union which underlie the debate about detente. Although it further simplifies an already simplified presentation, it is fair to say, I think, that hard-line critics see the USSR as strong, offensive, aggressive, effective, successful and, in view of all of the above, dangerous. (To be sure, Moscow is also seen as potentially vulnerable to Western pressure for otherwise a strategy of negative sanctions would have scant prospect of success and neither would the Jackson Amendment.) On the other hand, liberals (and radical critics, even more so) see the Soviet Union as weaker and more defensive-minded, as cautious, ineffective, unsuccessful and therefore not nearly so dangerous. Finally, Administration practitioners of detente come close to sharing their hard-line critics' image of the Soviet Union but seek through the steady application of carrot and stick to render Soviet power benign, that is to make Moscow more cautious and more defensive-minded.

Will the real Soviet Union please stand up? To this Sovietologist, Moscow's most striking quality is what I would call its unresolved dualism. What strikes me, in other words, is that hard-line critics and liberal defenders of detente, while far from being blind men, are really describing

two sides of the same elephant--with the result that each school's recommendations need to be qualified by insights from the other, and that the Administration's plan for taming the beast must be treated cautiously as well.

Examples of dualism: That the Soviet Union is militarily strong and getting stronger there can be no doubt. But Moscow's faltering economy, and particularly its staggering agriculture constitute an Achilles heel ("The Soviet Union is not immune to the vagaries of the market, either in industry or in agriculture. In some ways, it is more vulnerable than non-Communist economies,"⁶³ which make it susceptible to a political strategy employing both positive and negative incentives. To believe that Moscow's long-run aims are already benign requires that one discount Soviet leaders' endlessly reiterated commitment to the spread of communism and the documented activities on behalf of that commitment by such a paragon of peaceful coexistence as the KGB.⁶⁴ But the very ideology which spurs them on to expansion also tells the Soviet leaders that there is no need to hurry since the forces of history are on their side; and while ideology itself doesn't give the Soviets any particular stake in the status quo, the prospect of nuclear war and the challenge to them by the Chinese do. On the matter of Soviet aggressiveness the record is likewise mixed: the reckless placement of missiles in Cuba stands out as exceptional even in comparison to Stalin's giving a go-ahead for the Korean War and Khrushchev's provoking confrontations over Berlin. But in general Moscow has been careful to take only risks which it thought it could control. Finally, the Soviets have of course been effective and successful upon some occasions (one thinks immediately of Hungary in 1956 and Czecho-

slovakia in 1968), but they have also seen their investments depreciate (Yugoslavia and Rumania) and even disappear overnight (Indonesia and Ghana).

Nor is Soviet dualism limited to the simultaneous (which is to say unresolved or non-dialectical) existence of opposite qualities. There are also dynamic patterns such as the following: The Soviets may build certain weapons for defensive purposes (much of the recent naval build-up may fit this pattern) but then are tempted to use them offensively (as perhaps happened during the 1973 Middle East War). Moscow is guilty of exaggerated expectations leading to obvious failures (a good summary of the Soviet diplomatic record in Egypt), yet despite substantial setbacks the Soviets tend to persist in adventure as they have in the Middle East. It may be the opinion of both the North and the South that the Soviet Union is irrelevant to the whole range of economic issues between them, but assured by its ideology that it is objectively the champion of national liberation struggles, Moscow simply refuses to get the message and go away. If there are international agencies and conferences (some of them closed to Soviet participation) attempting to deal with global economic and resource issues, Moscow will eventually want to be part of the action. In the beginning it may even try to be civic-minded, but it will also be confused about its role (is it a producer or consumer in energy matters?) and in the end it may not be able to resist playing East-West games with the global agenda. Nor finally are the Soviets without ambivalence in the face of troubles within the Western camp. On the one hand, they have indicated concern--that inflation makes trade with the West more expensive and that political turmoil may lead to fascist outcomes. But on the other hand, they cannot but welcome what they

call the latest "crisis of capitalism" as proof that Communism, despite Soviet grain harvests, is the wave of the future. Contrary to its reputation in the conservative Western circles, Moscow has not created the weakness in NATO's southern flank (Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece and Turkey). But a regime which derives its very legitimacy from foreign policy successes simply cannot refrain from attempting to exploit for its own advantage even troubles which it did not create.

If this then is the real Soviet Union, what overall threat does it present to the United States? My short answer would be (1) that Moscow is less dangerous than hard-line critics of detente contend; (2) that it is more dangerous than left-liberal limitationists believe, and (3) that because both sides of its dual nature are deeply rooted Soviet foreign policy is probably more resistant to a strategy of behavior modification than the Administration would like to think. From which it would follow that the best overall policy for the United States to follow is one which might be called "detente plus." That is, to say that the Kissinger objective of restraining the Soviet Union is worth pursuing--but with an agnostic attitude toward the likely outcome, and with qualifications and alterations which take their cue from both the hard-line and liberal assumptions. The qualification suggested by hard-line criticism is that the United States ought not to look the other way and fail to use what negative sanctions we have when the Soviets take seriously disruptive actions in areas which are of substantial importance. The alteration suggested by left-liberals is that we remember that U.S.-Soviet relations are not the only game in town, and not necessarily the most important--and also that some of the new forces and issues which shape a new

global agenda requiring American attention are likely to have the effect of complicating life for the Soviets as well as ourselves.

Such is the general prescription. In a few remaining paragraphs I will attempt to sketch in more details (but with no claim to completeness), to illustrate "detente plus" by suggesting where it might lead in a case like Angola, and finally to reflect on the difficulties of formulating and implementing such a policy through the American political process.⁶⁵

To repeat: the assumption is that Moscow intends and has the capability to take at least some actions which would be harmful to American national interests, whether in the Middle East, Portugal or elsewhere. Hence the United States needs to pursue policies which make the opportunities for Soviet gains at Western expense as few as possible and which make clear to Moscow the danger of embarking on adventures which could lead to confrontation. But I also assume that not all Soviet adventures will be successful and that some which appear to be so will actually end up harming them more than us. Which, if true, would give us a margin for concentrating on construction of a workable system of global interdependence which might have the long-run effect of constraining Moscow's freedom of action. Thus, while the main military principle of "detente plus" would be that parity is sufficient because superiority is impossible, we should also build and maintain limited war-fighting capabilities in both strategic and conventional arms so as to emphasize to Moscow our determination to resist nuclear or non-nuclear blackmail. And while the economic prescription is to encourage extensive commercial intercourse as a positive incentive for restraint, we should also be prepared to threaten and if necessary carry out cutbacks and cut-offs. Diplomati

cally, "detente plus" would, in addition to pursuing the Chinese connection for all it is worth, attend to the pressing business of West-West, North-South and global relations mainly for their own sake, but also with the hope that successful handling of the economic, technological and other areas of interdependence (in some of which Moscow should be invited to participate) will "contain the Soviet Union without really trying."

In which cases of Soviet adventurism would "detente plus" be tougher and in which more relaxed than recent American policy? The question is not easy to answer in the abstract since American policy must take into account specific conditions of particular cases. That being said, however, an instructive general pattern does appear to exist. The classic (or ideal typical) case (of Portugal and Angola are recent examples) involves Moscow's offering aid and comfort to leftists in a situation of civil strife. In such cases, the hard-line recommendation is likely to be sanctions against both the Soviets and their local associates. At the other end of the spectrum, left-liberals would be tough on neither the Soviets nor their clients--on the ground either that the clients won't win, or it doesn't matter if they do, or that it may matter but the danger is not sufficiently great to justify the risk of "another Vietnam." As for the Administration, its tendency (exhibited in both Portugal and Angola) has been to be sterner with local leftists than with the Soviets who, it is true, get a public tongue lashing but apparently not much more than that.

What then would "detente plus" prescribe? It would suggest as a general principle going more easily on local leftists (for a variety of moral, legal and prudential reasons) while applying more direct pressure on Moscow. Where would "detente plus" lead in Angola? It would have no automatic response; no presumption for action or abstention would follow as readily as appears to have been the case with those debating Angola in Washington. What African as well as international forces do the warring sides actually represent? Are

local parties equally creatures of their respective foreign patrons or is one side more truly indigenous and (dare one use the much-abused word?) progressive? What would be the effect of a victory by the Soviet-supported side on Western shipping and naval activities? What would be the implications for Western raw material supplies and for the future of relations between South Africa and black liberation movements? Finally how likely is it that the Soviet clients would win with or without continued Soviet aid, and what would be the likely effect on various states' perceptions (particularly Moscow's) if the Soviet client were to achieve an uncontested victory? Theoretically, these and other questions have been asked and answered by the Administration and its hard-line and left-wing critics. But one senses that the spirit of the process may have run in reverse with questions answered and then asked. Having no basis for answering the strictly African questions involved, I focus on the disturbing fact that the Soviets have sent not only massive aid in arms and money, but have also ferried in several thousand Cuban mercenaries. That move alone, with its potential for repetition elsewhere, seems to justify some action. But rather than involving ourselves directly, rather than assuming that it's morally right and practically efficient to send a message to Moscow by encouraging Africans to kill each other, why not deal directly with the issue which bothers us most, which is to say the Soviet involvement? Why not turn a positive incentive into a negative sanction by denying the Soviets some economic concession they seek? One question with such a strategy is would it work? But another question is whether "detente plus" is a feasible approach in American politics.

Detente itself, as Henry Kissinger has often pointed out, is a policy which runs against several American grains. It demands steady and long-term efforts to achieve a limited modification of Soviet behavior, a goal which first of all is a far cry from the traditional American quest for perpetual

peace and democracy for all, and secondly is one which we may never be able to say with certainty has been achieved. For according to Kissinger, the question of whether the limited alteration so far in Soviet behavior is tactical or not is in a sense "immaterial." For "whether the change is temporary and tactical, or lasting and permanent, our task is essentially the same: to transform that change into a permanent condition devoted to the purpose of a secure peace and mankind's aspiration for a better life. A tactical change sufficiently prolonged becomes a lasting transformation."⁶⁶

Not only is that a tall order to put to Americans, it may not even be tall enough. For "detente plus" would demand not only long-run steadiness, but also the willingness and ability to sound the alarm and apply pressure to Moscow when the situation requires it, and at the same time, the capacity to keep our cool in cases where Soviet adventures seem likely to damage only themselves. Whether the United States has any one of these qualities, not to mention all three, is a sobering question. We have in the past both shown a talent for being hysterical about threats from abroad as well as the opposite tendency to ignore threats to our peril. What we now require is the ability to play chess with the Soviet Union while at the same time not paying too much attention to the board. Solzhenitsyn has said about the Soviet as chess player, that "if he cannot win the game on the board, he will take a club from behind his back and shatter the skull of the other chess player, winning the game in that way."⁶⁷ And even less apocalyptic former citizens of the USSR warn that Moscow is just as likely as not to put a rook in its pocket. But even assuming we could muster sufficient understanding of the Soviet mentality to match them at chess (for example, by realizing that although the European Security Conference did "only ratify" a long-accepted status quo, still, the Soviets were so anxious for the symbolic gesture that they might well have been willing to pay with more concessions

than were actually achieved), even then, it would be a question whether American politics would permit the game to be played at all. For consider the fact that although trade is a crucial piece, it has proved impossible for President and Congress to agree on a strategy for playing it. And if it were possible to get such agreement, the increasing stake which businessmen and farmers have in trade might make it equally difficult to sacrifice the piece if and when the need to do so arose.

The path of "detente plus," like that of detente itself is full of potential minefields, and mind-sets as well. One "plus" in "detente plus" would be a greater willingness to use American leverage on behalf of human rights by helping individual Soviet citizens rather than attempting to coerce change in the Soviet system itself. But whether that distinction can be made and held in the United States is as problematic as whether it would work in relations with Moscow. Another principle of "detente plus" is that peace is not necessarily as indivisible as used to be argued during the Vietnam War. Yet will any Administration be able to avoid rhetoric ("generation of peace") which complicates even further the excruciating task of deciding when and where to divide or not to divide?

Can the United States summon the intelligence and the will to do what is necessary--no more and no less? Is that beyond the realm of leadership in a democratic polity? Portentous questions these--but the first step toward answering them may be the more modest one of attempting to understand and evaluate the debate about what is necessary in Soviet-American relations and how best to accomplish what needs to be done.

Footnotes

1. James Reston, The New York Times, August 15, 1975.
2. Time Magazine, November 17, 1975, 20.
3. I.F. Stone, "The Sakharov Campaign," The New York Review of Books, October 18, 1973, 3.
4. Pacem in Terris III--The Nixon-Kissinger Foreign Policy: Opportunities and Contradictions. Edited by Fred Warner Neal and Mary Kersey Harvey (Santa Barbara, California: Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, 1974), 94.
5. Commentary, July 1975, 33.
6. Pacem in Terris III--The Nixon-Kissinger Foreign Policy, 140.
7. Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, The Limits of Power (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 715.
8. Mary McCarthy, "Sons of the Morning," The New York Review of Books, January 25, 1973, 11.
9. Richard Barnet, The Roots of War (New York: Atheneum, 1972), 6.
10. Pacem in Terris III--The Nixon-Kissinger Foreign Policy, 96-97.
11. George Meany, "Labor and 'Detente'," AFL-CIO Free Trade Union News, October 1974, 2.
12. Letter to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, September 4, 1974.
Obtained from Mr. Rostow.
13. Meany, "Labor and 'Detente'," 5.
14. "The Quest for Detente--A Statement by the Foreign Policy Task Force of the Coalition for a Democratic Majority," July 31, 1974, 4.
15. Meany, "Labor and Detente'," 8.

16. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "America: You Must Think about the World," in Solzhenitsyn: The Voice of Freedom (Washington: AFL-CIO Publication No. 152, 1975), 19-20.
17. Henry Jackson, "Detente and Human Rights," in Pacem in Terris III--The Nixon-Kissinger Foreign Policy, 40-46.
18. The New York Times, September 23, 1973, 15.
19. See, for example, "Detente: An Evaluation," an article by a group of specialists on Soviet and international affairs (Robert Conquest, Brian Crozier, John Erickson, Joseph Godson, Gregory Grossman, Leopold Labedz, Bernard Lewis, Richard Pipes, Leonard Schapiro, Edward Shils, and P.J. Vatikiotis) reprinted by Subcommittee on Arms Control (Henry Jackson, Chairman) of the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate (Washington, USGPO, 1974).
20. Cited in George Meany, "Labor and 'Detente'," 4-5.
21. See Paul H. Nitze, "Assuring Strategic Stability in an Era of Detente," Foreign Affairs, January 1976, 207-232.
22. For an expression of the philosophy underlying this view see the long interview with Eugene V. Rostow published as William Whitworth, Naive Questions about War and Peace (New York: Norton, 1970).
23. The New York Times, March 8, 1974, 6. Italics added.
24. Henry Kissinger, A World Restored (New York: Grosset and Dunlop, 1964), 2.
25. See, in addition to Kissinger's own writings and President Nixon's State of the World messages, Stephen R. Graubard, Kissinger: Portrait of a Mind (New York: Norton, 1973).
26. Wall Street Journal, December 10, 1975, 20.
27. Marvin Kalb and Bernard Kalb, Kissinger (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974, 192.

28. This account draws heavily on the Kalbs' Kissinger. The interpretation of the Christmas bombing is on p. 422.
29. Henry Kissinger, "The Nature of the National Dialogues on Foreign Policy," in Pacem in Terris III--The Nixon-Kissinger Foreign Policy, 10.
30. Interview with Time Magazine, October 27, 1975, 36.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Detente, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 93rd Congress, 2nd Session, on United States Relations with Communist Countries (Washington, USGPO, 1975), 257. Hereafter cited as Detente Hearings.
34. Edward M. Kennedy, "Beyond Detente," Foreign Policy, Fall 1974, 3-29.
Interestingly enough, another liberal Democratic Senator, Walter F. Mondale, entitled his article in the October 1974 issue of Foreign Affairs-- "Beyond Detente--Toward International Economic Security."
35. Ibid., 3.
36. Ibid., 6.
37. Ibid., 19.
38. Ibid., 25.
39. Ibid., 28.
40. Ibid., 29.
41. Ibid., 5.
42. See, for example, Henry Kissinger, American Foreign Policy (New York: Norton, 1969), 89.
43. Kennedy, "Beyond Detente," 19.

44. Congressional Record, June 2, 1975, p. S9213.
45. Kennedy, "Beyond Detente," 11. *Italics added.*
46. Detente Hearings, 64.
47. Congressional Record, August 24, 1970, p. S14030.
48. The Washington Post, December 12, 1975, p. 415.
49. J. William Fulbright, "Basic Aspects of the National Interest," in Pacem in Terris III--The Nixon-Kissinger Foreign Policy, 22, 23, 37.
50. Detente Hearings, 66, 67.
51. For the counter-argument that while American fears were rational, Stalin's ultimately were not, see Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., "Origins of the Cold War," Foreign Affairs, October 1967, 22-52.
52. Gaddis Smith, Dean Acheson (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1972), 138.
53. Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, "How the Cold War Was Played," Foreign Affairs, October 1972, 204.
54. William Taubman, "Measuring Soviet Performance Against U.S. Performance in Foreign Policy," paper prepared for delivery at the 1975 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association.
55. An example of the circular "fly-by" technique is cited as part of a longer analysis of "Soviet Missile Deception," in Arnold Horelick and Myron Rush, Strategic Power and Soviet Foreign Policy. Khrushchev recollects his "fly-in-the-sky" boast in Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974), 533.
56. Reported by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., A Thousand Days (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1965), 302.

57. Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament, 498.
58. Quoted in Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, 304.
59. Ibid., 391.
60. See Theodore Sorenson, Kennedy (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 705.
61. See Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, 332-340, 548.
62. Quoted in Joseph Kraft, "Letter from Moscow," The New Yorker, June 24, 1972.
63. Marshall Goldman, "The Soviet Economy is Not Immune," Foreign Policy, Winter 1975-76, 85.
64. See John Barron, KGB (New York: Readers Digest Press, 1974).
65. The following paragraphs, like many of those above, reflect the views of Seyom Brown of the Brookings Institution, with whom the author co-chaired a Washington Study Group on U.S.-Soviet Relations for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in 1975.
66. Detente Hearings, 257.
67. Solzhenitsyn, "Communism: A Legacy of Terror," in Solzhenitsyn: The Voice of Freedom, 42.